

Birding events celebrate spring!

by Candace Ward



Kenai Refuge staff learning about birds. USFWS/Candace Ward

Spring is in the air! Our resident birds are beginning their mating behaviors—woodpeckers drumming on tree trunks, owls hooting in showy cadences, and bald eagles pairing up in cottonwood trees. The first of the migrants, elegant white trumpeter swans, have arrived at the outlets of Kenai and Skilak Lakes.

From now through mid-June, a wide array of bird species will arrive to mate and nest using suitable sites from your backyard woods to a wide variety of habi-

tats found on the Kenai Peninsula's public lands.

Alaska's wildlife refuges, parks, and forests, provide breeding, resting, and feeding sites for millions of resident and migratory birds. Our state has the right wild real estate to attract arctic terns from Antarctica, common loons from Baja California, and Golden plovers from Midway Island in the central Pacific.

If watching for these birds intrigues you, and you want to learn more about them, mark your calendar for upcoming spring bird events at the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and other peninsula locations.

The Kenai NWR Environmental Education Center will host a new Homeschool Discovery Room Program, "This One is for the Birds," from 10:00 am – 2:00 pm from Wednesday through Friday, April 11 – 13. Through games, crafts, and "hands on" bird activities, kids will learn about feathers, flight, identifying birds by song, and beak/feet adaptations.

This Homeschool Discovery Room Program is free and snacks will be provided.

If you are interested in participating in this program, you need to pre-register starting on March 28 with Education Specialist, Michelle Ostrowski, at 260-2811.

The community is invited to Spring Fun Day on Saturday, April 14, from 10 am to 3:30 pm at the Kenai NWR Visitor Center (VC) & Environmental Education Center (EEC). Refreshments are provided and all events are free to the public. They include:

10 am - Noon (EEC) – Families with kids of all ages can participate in activities, games, and crafts related to the amazing adaptations and behaviors of birds.

10 am - Noon (Port Road, Kenai River Flats) – Toby Burke and Todd Eskelin, Refuge biological technicians and bird experts, will host "drop-by" stations with spotting scopes to view waterfowl and shorebirds. Dress warmly, bring your binoculars, and enjoy birding with Toby and Todd.

11 am – Noon (VC) – Bird Treatment & Learning Center (Bird TLC) will host a bird "walk-by" with live birds including a great horned owl and a magpie.

Noon & 2 pm (VC) – Academy Award nominated film, "Winged Migration," will be shown. This 90-minute film has spectacular aerial photography fol-

lowing bird migrations throughout the seven continents of the world.

12:30 – 1:30 pm (EEC) - Bird TLC will host a sit down talk with live birds including a magpie and a great horned owl. Learn about these birds in-depth and the important work of Bird TLC from Anchorage.

2 - 3:30 pm - Todd Eskelin, Refuge biological technician and bird expert will guide a ¼ mile birding walk on the Keen Eye Nature Trail. Join Todd for an in-depth look at boreal forest birds. Pre-registration is required for this walk. Call Candace Ward, 262-7021, to make your reservation.

The 15th annual Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival in Homer runs from Thursday through Sunday, May 10 – 13. This event provides easy roadside viewing of 25 migratory shorebirds, an art and education fair, and special guest speaker John Acorn, the Nature Nut from the Discovery Channel. To get all the details and to register for events visit www.homer.alaska.org/shorebird.html

The 3rd annual Kenai Shorebird Celebration will

take place Wednesday, May 16 & Saturday, May 19. These two days are filled with interesting discussions and fantastic field trips centered on shorebirds. This is great event for both beginner and advanced birders. Sponsored by the Kenai Watershed Forum, contact Josselyn O'Connor at 260-5449 for more information or visit <http://www.kenaiwatershed.org/shorebird.html>.

Join in these fun, educational birding programs. Discover more about our feathered friends and the importance of Alaska's public lands to their survival.

Candace Ward is an enthusiastic beginning birder, who works as a park ranger in the Refuge's information and education program. For more information, contact Kenai National Wildlife Refuge at 262-7021. You can check on new bird arrivals or report your recent bird sightings on the Kenai NWR Birding hotline at (907) 262-2300. Previous Refuge Previous Refuge Notebook columns can be viewed on the Web at <http://www.fws.gov/refuge/kenai/>.